

ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

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Co-Chairs:

Hon. Clyde Burmaster

Hon. William A. Pauly

Minutes of Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Meeting

June 6, 2001

Present: Burmaster, Eldridge, Erck, Ferraro, Johnston (proxy), Lehman, McMahon, Meal, Morse, Peoples, Simon, Weinstein, Wendel

Excused: None

Absent: Connolly, DeBenedetti, Dziedzic, Greenan, Kucharski, O'Connor, Pauly, Rubin, Rutecki, Schuler, Villani

Co-Chair Burmaster called the meeting to order at 8 a.m. New member Thomas Kucharski, executive director of the Erie County Industrial Development Agency, was welcomed, as were new ad hoc members Cyd Bennett, Richard Geiger, and Stan Rydelek. Minutes of the March, 2001 meeting were amended and approved.

The Economic Development Subcommittee report was amended and received and filed, with approval granted to encourage New York State to release the RFP for the Lehigh Valley yard. The Government Affairs Subcommittee report was received and filed. The Tourism and Culture's Subcommittee report was received and filed. The Transportation Subcommittee report was received and filed, with approval granted to pursue four bike trail projects by initiating discussions with the municipalities involved to apply for federal funding. Mr. David Lackey mentioned that sites like bike trails and visitor centers need to have good signage to be effective. ENRP member Ferraro noted that GBNRTC projects are signed, but that local governments need to be encouraged to put signs on their projects.

On the topic of power relicensing, Ferraro reported that the Relicensing Consensus Committee (RCC) is moving forward, with subcommittees currently being formed. Several ENRP members are serving on the RCC, and the Power Authority is supporting the group. There are still three groups out there, but all are communicating with each other. Ferraro's hope is that there will be eventually only two groups. The settlement package with Messina should be completed by October of this year, and then the focus will be on our area. ENRP member Weinstein agreed that working together under an umbrella group with separate identities within might be the way to go.

The Buffalo Niagara Tourist Express was discussed, as the press conference to kick off the service was scheduled for 10 a.m. that morning. The details of the project were given, and several suggestions were made such as surveying the riders during this season and weeding out early bugs during the course of the season. It was stressed that this is the first year of a multi-year pilot, and that the initial focus was on the mechanics of the service. Advertising and possible expansion to family venues will be taken up after the first season.

(cont.)

Members: Hon. John Connolly * Hon. Albert DeBenedetti * Mr. Thomas Dziedzic * Mr. Brian Eldridge * Hon. Bradley Erck * Mr. Samuel Ferraro * Hon. John Greenan * Mr. Clyde Johnston * Mr. Thomas Kucharski * Ms. Maria Lehman * Hon. Peter McMahon * Hon. Gerald Meal * Mr. Robert Miller * Hon. Sean O'Connor * Hon. Crystal Peoples * Mr. Lawrence Rubin * Mr. David Rutecki * Mr. Kevin Schuler * Mr. John Simon * Hon. Robert Villani * Hon. Barry Weinstein, M.D. * Mr. Peter Wendel * Ad Hoc: Ms. Cyd Bennett, Mr. Richard Geiger, Mr. Luke Rich, Mr. Stan Rydelek

Under old business, Weinstein reported that the Government Affairs committee had discussed the regional planning concept, as requested by the general body. Five possible hosts for the group had been considered – the MPO, BNE, a new entity, the counties' planning departments, or the ENRP. There are various levels of staffing on each. Ferraro noted that recreating the board will cost money. ENRP member Morse asked what we are trying to solve and who would have decision-making authority? He said that these questions need to be answered prior to the recreation, and that perhaps the process starts out ad hoc with loaned staff and accomplishes some objectives rather than spending money on staff and a board first. ENRP member Wendel suggested that we start with the end goal in mind.

Co-chair Burmaster suggested that a focus group meet over the summer on the topic and report back at the September general meeting. Members Eldridge, Ferraro, Lehman, McMahon, Morse, Peoples, Simon, and Wendel volunteered for the group, and Morse agreed to facilitate the effort.

The next meeting was announced for Friday, September 28 in Niagara County. The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 a.m.